



Machiavelli's Prince & Alchemical Transformation: Action & the Archetype of Regeneration

Author(s): James M. Glass

Source: *Polity*, Summer, 1976, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Summer, 1976), pp. 503-528

Published by: The University of Chicago Press on behalf of the Northeastern Political Science Association

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3234288>

REFERENCES

Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:

https://www.jstor.org/stable/3234288?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents

You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



Northeastern Political Science Association and The University of Chicago Press are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Polity*

JSTOR

Machiavelli's Prince & Alchemical Transformation: Action & the Archetype of Regeneration

James M. Glass

University of Maryland

The modernity of Machiavelli seems well established. However, James Glass discerns in The Prince symbol patterns that are reminiscent of the work of the alchemist with their roots in medieval thought. While not attributing to Machiavelli any conscious concern with alchemy, Glass detects traces of alchemical symbolism in Machiavelli's theoretical images. The Prince figure suggests a therapeutic power bringing about a transformation which fundamentally alters the structure of the political order.

James M. Glass is associate professor at the University of Maryland, College Park. A previous contributor to Polity, he has published articles in Political Theory, Psychiatry, Political Studies, Politics and Society, and American Politics Quarterly. His research includes work in psychiatry, psychoanalytic theory, and political philosophy.

I. Introduction

Several factors distinguish the role of the alchemist from that of the theorist: alchemy was generally practiced in private, away from public view; the alchemist refused to identify the consequences of what he accomplished in the laboratory with any social purpose or political event; much of his work drew upon theological motifs and elaborated religious themes. Jung, for example, sees a close connection between Christian mysticism and certain strains or tendencies in alchemy. The alchemist could not dissociate the physical operations of transmutation from his own inner strivings for redemption; (in Jung's interpretation the alchemical *opus* symbolizes forces present in the collective unconscious). Alchemy as the practice of a magical chemistry holds little or no direct

relationship with political theory. If anything, the alchemical *opus* suggests a retreat from the political and the public; and the alchemical tradition could not be considered a contribution to the development of political ideas, themes, and commitments, although alchemy does have a long tradition reaching back to the Greeks. Some material shows that alchemy had an impact on more esoteric developments in Western philosophy; but, as a rule, the tradition stands separate from dominant philosophical forms and methods, particularly those of political philosophy.¹ In what respect, then, does alchemical theory—from a Jungian perspective—tell us something useful about Machiavelli's Prince?

This paper does not argue that Machiavelli was an alchemist; rather it suggests that *The Prince* contains certain symbol patterns which occur in the alchemical *imaginatio* or *opus*; both creations and acts of imagination raise issues affecting the nature and health of the psyche. Like the alchemist, Machiavelli seeks to redeem an almost hopelessly depraved human situation; and looking at *The Prince* not so much as a document in the history of political theory but as a symbology revealing critical tendencies in the unconscious makes the analogy fruitful. Further, like the alchemical *opus*, Machiavelli's conception of a redeemed political environment relies heavily on the singular and total power of a transforming agency which seems to be independent of constraints condition-

1. The histories of alchemy contain often copious information detailing the lives of particular alchemists and the nature of their work. With the exception of Jung, Eliade, and a few others, very little appears on the psychological implications of alchemical formulations—particularly from the standpoint of linking alchemical theory to a structural conception of the psyche. Frances Yates' work on alchemy and various aspects of the tradition should be of special interest to historians. It is unfortunate, but the historians of alchemy generally neglect Jungian analytical perspectives. For some interesting studies of alchemy, its practice and tradition, see the following: Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); Frances Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972); Marcelli Berthelot, *Les origines de l'alchimie* (Paris: Librairie des sciences et des arts, 1938); E. J. Holmyard, *Alchemy* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968); Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1923–58); Wayne Shumaker, *The Occult Sciences in the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); William Leo, *Alchemy* (Los Angeles: Sherbourne Press, 1972); T. Burckhardt, *Alchemy: Science of the Cosmos; Science of the Soul* (London: Stuart and Watkins, 1967); Elie-Charles Flamann, *Érotique de l'alchimie* (Paris: P. Belfond, 1970); J. Read, *The Alchemist in Life, Literature and Art* (London: T. Nelson, 1947); A. H. Hopkins, *Alchemy: Child of Greek Philosophy* (New York: AMS Press, 1967); H. J. Sheppard, "The Ouroboros and the Unity of Matter in Alchemy: A Study in Origins," *Ambix*, x, 2 (June, 1962).

ing normal or conventional exchange and value. Such a transforming agency brings life to a corrupt set of circumstances, gives birth to a new reality and a new consciousness. Alchemy brings health to matter; the alchemical process realizes on a conscious level what Jung calls the archetype of rebirth. Analogously, Machiavelli's Prince clears debris from the painful context of Italian political life; and the Prince figure refounds a political reality obscured by historical decline and the loss of a sense of the beginnings. Like the alchemist, Machiavelli looks at the prince as something like a curing Elixir with sufficient power (and magic) to break through moribund historical values and a human nature that inevitably produces political entropy. Machiavelli's Prince gives coherence, form, and meaning to a political matter overwhelmed by chaos; and something gives the Prince, like the alchemical Mercurius, enormous energy. In Jung's argument energy derives from the unconscious and the archetypes which give rise to critical symbol formations.

II. A Jungian Perspective and the Unconscious as History and Symbology

It might be useful at the outset to clarify a few terms in Jungian analysis which occur throughout the discussion.

To begin with, Jung accepts the idea of an unconscious, a structure in the psyche containing form and energy, which precedes the development of consciousness. Each individual possesses a personal unconscious, but in terms of Jungian analytic theory, that personal unconscious exists in relation to a collective unconscious. "The collective unconscious is a part of the psyche which can be negatively distinguished from the personal unconscious by the fact that it does not, like the latter, owe its existence to personal experience and consequently is not a personal acquisition."² Its origin is archaic, and its content differs from that of the personal unconscious. The contents of the collective unconscious are known as archetypes, "the existence of definite forms in the psyche which seem to be present always and everywhere." Complexes reside in the personal unconscious, but they may be generated through perverse exchange between personal experience and the collective archetypes. In mythological symbolism archetypes can be understood as motifs; they have also been called *représentations collectives*, categories of the imagination, primordial thoughts. Whatever their specific name, archetypes refer to a

2. C. G. Jung, "The Concept of the Collective Unconscious," *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, in *Collected Works* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969), vol. 9, pt. 1, p. 42.

"psychic system of a collective universal and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals . . . pre-existent forms . . . which can only become conscious" ³ through their inferential presence in symbols.

A symbol for Jung provides indirect evidence of the existence of an archetype—especially in terms of the intensity with which a symbol strikes consciousness. Symbols may be alive, or moribund (dead); if they are *alive*, they possess numinosity, an overwhelming power to act as identifying signs containing critical psychological meaning for an audience. If symbols have become redundant or constitute *dead* representations in consciousness, they lack any significant or determining power over action. Archetypes never appear directly in consciousness; it is the numinous symbol that reveals the impact an archetypal formation has on consciousness. To experience a symbol, then, to internalize its power as affect, means psychically to recapitulate a primal event, to feel the symbol as numinous. A symbol contains energy; it transforms psychic energy and produces for consciousness powerful representations having their origins in an unconscious dynamic. Symbols provide an outlet for instinctual energy; "we have every reason to value symbol formation and to render homage to the symbol as an inestimable means of utilizing the mere instinctual flow of energy for effective work." Symbols, then, and their quality as numinous or charged embody what Jung calls the deflection of the natural flow of psychic energy.⁴

The archetype of particular interest in this analysis is that of rebirth; a motif Jung finds in dreams, myths, and all forms of psychological experience. The archetype of rebirth often appears as a need, an impulse or drive towards healing. "In the earliest beginnings of medicine," Jung argues, "the idea of a rebirth" was "a magical means of healing; in many religions it is the central mystical experience." In alchemical symbolism and in fantasies "occurring in numberless children, large and small. . . ." ⁵

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 42–43.

4. C. G. Jung, "On Psychic Energy," *On the Nature of the Psyche*, in *Collected Works* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, Bollingen Paperback edition, 1975), vol. 8, p. 47. Cf. the following: "The history of civilization has amply demonstrated that man possesses a relative surplus of energy that is capable of application apart from the natural flow. The fact that the symbol makes this deflection possible proves that not all the libido is bound up in a form that enforces the natural flow, but that a certain amount of energy remains over, which could be called excess libido" (p. 47). A symbol has the power to transform, to convert energy. They constitute a libido analogue, and "can give equivalent expression to the libido and canalize it into a form different from the original one" (p. 48).

5. C. G. Jung, "The Concept of the Collective Unconscious," vol. 9, pt. 1, p. 45.

Jung sees the archetype of rebirth as an “omnipresent human need” in the history of the unconscious.

It is critical in Jungian theory to conceive of self-development as a historical process; yet, he argues the legitimacy of the unconscious as a history is not often accepted or recognized. “Historically as well as individually, our consciousness has developed out of the darkness and somnolence of primordial unconsciousness.”⁶ The unconscious precedes in terms of development what we accept as cognition or ego awareness. “There were psychic processes and functions long before any ego-consciousness existed.”⁷ Further, “consciousness grows out of an unconscious psyche which is older” than egoic consciousness and “which goes on functioning together with it or even in spite of it.”⁸ For Jung pathology in the individual, society, and political life derives from irruption of unconscious contents into consciousness; bewitchment, loss of soul, possession,⁹ and particularly deranged, irrational political doctrines and leaders come from archetypal contents overtaking consciousness, instinctual energy totally dominating conscious decisions.

Critical to Jung’s psychology (and this analysis) is a figure he calls the *anima*, the archetype of the feminine; the *anima* “live[s] and function[s] in the deeper layers of the unconscious, especially that phylogenetic substratum which I have called the collective unconscious.” The figure brings “into our ephemeral consciousness an unknown psychic life belonging to a remote past.” It is part of an *archaic stratum*¹⁰ and if it overpowers consciousness can cause great harm. Its uncontrolled irruption into consciousness “amounts to a psychosis”; but primarily for Jung, the *anima* is a feminine presence personified in symbol and psychologically vital to existence. As such, in its symbolical meaning, the *anima* suggests some interesting analogues with Fortuna. But more on this later.

Finally, the theory of individuation—a central concept in Jungian psychotherapy. The individuated self, almost an ideal type, describes a psyche where the two incongruous halves, consciousness and unconsciousness, form a whole. Individuation primarily involves control of the unconscious—and a relation to the collective unconscious, where archetypal formations are not gripping and destroying the autonomy of ego relations. “If we understand anything of the unconscious, we know that

6. C. G. Jung, “Conscious, Unconscious, and Individuation,” vol. 9, pt. 1, p. 280.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 280.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 281.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*, above quotations, pp. 286–87.

it cannot be swallowed. We also know that it is dangerous to suppress it, because the unconscious is life and this life turns against us if suppressed, as happens in neurosis.” Further, when either polarity of the psyche turns against the other, a therapeutic outcome becomes impossible; “consciousness and unconsciousness do not make a whole when one of them is suppressed and injured by the other.” If conflict does exist, and conflict between the halves of the psyche need not be destructive, “let it at least be a fair fight with equal rights on both sides.”¹¹ Consciousness should “defend its reason” and the “chaotic life” of the unconscious should be accepted, looked at, and not dismissed as a forbidden realm hidden from our awareness. Jung never argues that therapy involves externalizing energy without knowledge either of its purpose, content, or direction. By tapping the unconscious, the individual is not inevitably thrown into a wolf-like state; rather, by accepting what the tension of the unconscious means as an integral part of the psyche, the individual ego arrives at a therapeutic understanding of the roots of behavior and action. That awareness channels energy and restrains tendencies in psychological life that might, under certain conditions, spill over into senseless brutality and massive destruction. It is significant that all too often in politics, Jung argues, societies find themselves dominated by leaders whose relationship with archetypes is intensely pathological.

For Jung open conflict and open collaboration between consciousness and unconsciousness indicates a healthy, individuated self—a self whose vitality protects what is valuable in human existence and turns against the horror and degradation of human brutality; this impulse characterizes alchemical transmutation, a drive for unity, a need to transcend violence through a regeneration of experience. “It turned out to my great astonishment,” Jung argues, “that the ‘symbol formation’ of individuation has the closest affinities with alchemical ideas and especially with the conceptions of the ‘uniting symbol.’” What happens in *The Prince* is a similar process; acting as a uniting symbol, the Prince figure brings redemption to Italy. In psychoanalytic terms, Jung calls the union of opposites the *transcendent function*, a “rounding of the personality into a whole . . . the goal of a psychotherapy that claims to be more than a mere cure of symptoms.”¹² Similarly with alchemy: the alchemical *rejuvenatio*, the redemption of base substances, seeks a wholeness, a totality of meaning which can only follow the alchemist’s intervention in the natural flow of the *prima materia*. What the alchemist sees as putrid matter appears for Machiavelli in those political types who prolong Italy’s suffering. Only a

11. *Ibid.*, above quotations, p. 288.

12. *Ibid.*, above quotations, p. 289.

radical intervention will cure the environment of a persistent sickness.

I should like now to consider the significance of the Prince as a psychological type, particularly in view of the analogy that can be drawn between the entropic political context in which the Prince operates and the alchemical reality (the *prima materia*) that precipitates the need for rebirth and regeneration. From a Jungian perspective, the action of the Prince, unlike the perverse environment that surrounds him, is not symptomatic of psychic imbalance or distortion; while the Prince moves and survives in a violent and often corrupt politics, the impact of that corruption leaves his character untouched.

III. Alchemical Process and Analogues in the Prince: Activity and Change

In some respects, Machiavelli's Prince looks like what Jung would call an individuated self, a freely moving consciousness in touch with unconscious energy. As self-representation (or symbology) the Prince does not appear to be possessed or dominated by any complex-related phenomena. He shows no symptoms of psychological disintegration or needless brutality; the Prince neither enjoys killing nor pursues ends or purposes to satisfy an inner need to destroy. Even though Machiavelli sees brutality and avarice as endemic to human nature, the character structure of the Prince seems free of natural or historically determined human nature, the evil Machiavelli speaks about in the *Discourses*. A motive may be inferred from the impassioned plea Machiavelli makes in the last chapter of *The Prince*; however, it is a motive at variance with the bleak picture of human nature Machiavelli attributes to the pattern of human response and exchange. It is not the Prince who is pathological, but the environment surrounding him, what the alchemist sees as the "*cruda, confusa; grossa, crassa, densa.*"¹³

In his corrupt field the Prince confronts individuals whose motives are pathologically distorted; psychic energy seems uncontrollable, and all purposes degenerate into the rootless pursuit of power. It is only the Prince (again reading from the context established by the last chapter) who pursues a value, who externalizes energy for a purpose, beyond self-gratification and the lust after power. All competing *condottieri* seem filled with greed, fear, impulses dominated by necessity. Each actor looks more wolf-like than the next, and Italy as the victim is devoured.

13. C. G. Jung, "Paracelsus as a Spiritual Phenomenon," *Alchemical Studies*, in *Collected Works* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970), vol. 13, p. 140.

It is a situation Jung would regard as symptomatic. Everything appears to be out of control, and the brutality of the competition for power inevitably produces tragic consequences. In individual psycho-pathology, such an uncontained irruption of energy might destroy the self; in political terms, it can easily overtake an entire society and bring ruin to its people.

While his action from the perspective of convention might seem brutal, the Prince never falls victim to uncontrollable desires; nor do we confront a self which appears to be dominated by an insatiable need for power. Nor is the Prince motivated because he lusts after money or serves as someone's mercenary. The context for behavior appears in the last chapter of *The Prince*; and the psychological model of alchemy, its symbolization of renewal and regeneration, reveals something of the Prince's function as an agency of rebirth. All relationships in Machiavelli's political environment, from a Jungian vantage-point, find themselves unfree, dependent on an energy embodied in perverse forms, consciousness completely determined by aberrant archetypal formations. Yet, the Prince is different; while he acts, transforms, and lives in baseness, he still seems free of its corrosive consequences. The Prince never carries evidence of symptom and decay; and like the alchemist, Machiavelli sees his vision rising from violence, from the movement and chaos implicit in existence. Action initiates change; and the Prince knows how and when to act.

In working alone to solve fundamental questions of matter and transformation, the alchemist isolates himself from society and, in his very private alienation, seeks to accomplish what even the most basic laws of nature apparently deny: the transformation of the base into the gold. In the turbulence of Italy, Machiavelli moves in a similar direction; he attacks convention and perverse historical forms; yet his advice and vision receive no hearing. None of his contemporaries understand what the Prince means, what his action implies for the health of Italy; but in Machiavelli's imagination, it is the Prince who drives the barbarians out of Italy. Like the alchemist's *imaginatio*, Machiavelli finds it vital to create a novel set of relations, perceptions, and assumptions designed to liberate a life-creating force from the imprisoned matter of history. Yet his society refuses to accept the magic of that vision. Both the alchemist and the theorist work on matter in chaos, on a fluid universe resisting conventional modes of control; both commit themselves to attaining fundamental alterations in a given, material situation. Like the alchemical *massa confusa*, Machiavelli sees little or no coherence in Italy's political environment. And both strive for a re-enactment of the beginnings; each

hopes for a *rejuvenatio*. In what sense, then, does the alchemist intervene in natural process?

Because of its “wisdom and art,” Jung suggests, alchemy “liberate[s] the world creating *Nous* or *Logos* lost in the world’s materiality for the benefit of mankind.”¹⁴ The alchemist assumes that by entering into the processes of nature he might perfect them; and in his *imaginatio* we witness the “fabulous consummation of a faith in the possibility of changing Nature by human labours. . . .”¹⁵ Nature reveals pain, and all natural process initiates decay, but the alchemical intervention accelerates the tempo of things; what is said about the *imaginatio* could be said of Machiavelli’s vision; both act like an “Elixir, which being poured on imperfect metals, perfects them completely. . . .”¹⁶ Imperfection for the alchemist described a condition of entropy; nothing held permanent shape, nothing could be considered constant or invariable; and all human experience found itself subject to the corrosive forces of nature. Nature herself pulls individuals into disastrous situations; and flux in human experience only duplicates the primordial chaos of nature.

It is likely that the alchemist would agree with Machiavelli’s observation: “All human affairs [are] in motion”; they “cannot remain fixed, they must needs rise up or sink down.”¹⁷ Necessity thrives on unstable and changing circumstances; it is a powerful force in Machiavelli’s political theory, and an equally significant presence for the alchemists. Frequently, particularly in the *Discourses*, Machiavelli seems resigned to the “corruption that now prevails,”¹⁸ the power of necessity, its role in producing human folly, and the ever present, insatiable human wants. “Men are born, live and die,” he argues, “always with one and the same nature,”¹⁹ and despair surrounds all human action. “Man has from Nature the power and wish to desire everything and from Fortune the power to attain but little; the result is unending discontent in human minds and weariness with what is attained.”²⁰ It is unlikely that the Prince will re-

14. C. G. Jung, “Religious Ideas in Alchemy,” *Psychology and Alchemy*, in *Collected Works* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974), vol. 12, p. 355.

15. Mircea Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible* (New York: Harper 1962), p. 172.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

17. Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livius*, in *Machiavelli: The Chief Works and Others*, trans. Allan Gilbert (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1965), p. 210.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 324.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 226.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 323.

cover any godlike qualities in human nature; what he will recover, however, is the possibility of a *unificatio*, a transformation in the basic structure of the political community. It is in this respect that he draws from the *prima materia* of Italy a life-giving potential.

The alchemist accepted the givenness of human depravity and corruption; to experience human nature was like a “terrible and sinister experience, . . . [a] descent into hell”; everywhere he turned, the alchemist saw evidence of “ravages inseparable from the human condition,”²¹ the ominous “dark, body bound nature of man.” In the alchemical drama, total depravity rose from the *prima materia*, the fluid shapeless mass.²² It is this sense of the world Machiavelli observed amongst his own contemporaries and in his examination of the historical record; he levels a harsh judgment against the intent of human motives. “Men feel more sorrow for a farm taken away from them than for a brother or a father put to death, because sometimes death is forgotten but property never.”²³ Any person then who would found a political community should be totally aware of the extent of human depravity; and for Machiavelli the greatest error a founder can make is to mystify and glorify human nature: “it is necessary for him who lays out a state and arranges laws for it to presuppose that all men are evil and that they are always going to act according to the wickedness of their spirits whenever they have free scope.”²⁴ Not only do men seek to aggrandize themselves, but they are equally obsessed by the fear of loss—a state of mind spurring individuals to greater efforts of accumulation. “It is generally held that a man is not in secure possession of what he has if he does not gain something new in addition.”²⁵ For the alchemist the consequence of such imperfection lies in the “terrifying form of strange demoniacal figures . . . the secure source of life shortening diseases.”²⁶ For Machiavelli it appears in the bleeding body of Italy.

The alchemist, then, turns from a corrupt world, a debased human nature, and desperately seeks an antidote to separation; he strives for a *unificatio* that through the power of a transforming agency might accomplish magical consequences. “Not separation of the natures, but union of the natures was the goal of alchemy,”²⁷ the *coniunctio*. What this implies

21. Eliade, pp. 121, 157

22. Ibid., p. 153.

23. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, in Gilbert, *The Chief Works*, p. 63n., from a letter to Giovanni de' Medici, 1512.

24. *Discourses*, p. 201.

25. Ibid., p. 206.

26. Jung, “Paracelsus as a Spiritual Phenomenon,” vol. 13, p. 161.

27. Ibid.

for an understanding of Machiavelli's *Prince* involves looking at a crucial event in the alchemical *opus*, the wedding feast, or the chymical marriage.

IV. Fortuna and the Prince: Eros and Machiavelli's Chymical Marriage

A recurrent theme in much alchemical literature is the chymical marriage, or the joining of opposites, the *coniunctio*. In Jungian analytic theory the psyche is composed of opposites, and psychological life reflects the struggle and relationship between opposites. Such tension produces energy; and in alchemical symbolism fundamental oppositions appear in many forms. For example, Jung speaks about the figures *sol* and *luna*, *rex* and *regina*;²⁸ Eliade refers to the mixture of the male and female ores; smelting represents a "sacred, secular union, a sacred marriage,"²⁹ and alchemical transformation "necessarily implies the prior union of male and female elements."³⁰ It is a process which "expedite[s] maturation, . . . precipitate[s] a birth."³¹ In psychoanalytic terms, opposites externalize energy, yet that externalization is therapeutic only if the tension holds its own power and does not fall into entropy. Conflict for Jung acts creatively if it is bounded within a context, a *unifactio* manifested psychoanalytically in the individuated self, the whole personality. For Machiavelli, unification depends on uncovering the beginnings (a sense of first principle) and, as I shall argue, the consequences of the joining (or marriage) of Fortuna with the Prince.

In the *Discourses* we receive some indication of how Machiavelli conceives the character of the beginnings, what may be uncovered in the collective unconscious of history. As a theoretical statement, the *Discourses* provides a context for understanding what the action of the *Prince* means as an archetypal event, an event founding and unmasking value. It is impossible here to deal with the entire argument of the *Discourses*, but I should like to focus on a few points that may give some content to what the outcome of the *unifactio* suggests as a political phenomenon. The chymical marriage produces a magical event for the alchemist; for the theorist the *unifactio* of Italy brings to consciousness

28. Cf. C. G. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis: An Inquiry into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy*, in *Collected Works* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970), vol. 14. See particularly sections on "The Personification of Opposites," (iii), "Rex and Regina," (iv), and "The Conjunction," (vi).

29. Eliade, op. cit. p. 52.

30. Ibid., p. 60.

31. Ibid., p. 75.

the realization of a political value whose autonomy made Rome great.

In the ancient Republic, public liberty thrived on conflict; and the “discord between the people and the Roman senate,” rather than destroying the foundations of political meaning, made it more powerful and binding on the consciousness of its citizenry. Within these limits—the sense of political identity and the implicit knowledge that participation included more than self-interested behavior—opposition and tension developed a political structure and context; the tension inside the city of Rome, rather than releasing senseless destruction, strengthened the unity of the Republic; and the institutions of the Republic withstood tremendous and far-reaching change. Yet, persistently, the citizenry remained faithful to *fides*,³² public loyalty; and, throughout its duration, the Republic never repudiated its fundamental political ideal. In Jungian terms, the symbols of Republican *virtù*, their embodiment as a statement about participation and freedom, possessed a numinous character; and the political life of the Republic and its values and institutions combined in a vital life-force with an existence beyond any single, demanding claim. These qualities gave Rome dynamism and defined a developmental process. “If Rome had planned to take away the causes of riot,” Machiavelli maintains, “it would also have taken away the causes of growth.”³³

Both Jung and Machiavelli see conflict as essential for the health of a growing and expanding organism; *stasis* brings disintegration, a folding inward, and a lessening of autonomy and free action. In Rome, the energy deriving from internal conflict never destroyed the basic ethical content of *fides*; on the contrary, even in the face of class struggle, political conflict occurred within a symbolic ordering of meaning that was sufficiently resilient to withstand hostility. The vitality of Rome, then, lay in its ability to both nurture a creative tension, and yet not be threatened by it. This consciousness of political significance enabled Rome to con-

32. For an interesting analysis of the concept of *fides* see David C. Rapaport, “Rome: *Fides* and *Obsequium*, Rise and Fall,” in *Political and Legal Obligation: Nomos XII*, ed. J. Roland Pennock and John Chapman (New York: Atherton Press, 1970). Rapaport describes *fides* as a goddess and a quality residing in men.... To have *fides* was to “have the power to stimulate confidence, for *fides* fundamentally signified dependability and truth,.... *fides* presumed capacities for self control and prudent judgment,.... it signified fidelity, but it was always the special quality of those strong enough to trust their own judgments.” *Fides* demonstrated “strength, it husbanded, concentrated and created energy.” For Machiavelli, this quality of *fides*, so significant in preserving a political realm, in instituting a respect for the public and for the political relationships generated in the public space, formed a critical dynamic of the ancient Roman Republic. Cf. pp. 231–233. In Jungian terms, *fides* suggests individuation and autonomy.

33. *Discourses*, p. 209.

trol itself, to support its own autonomy, and to thrive within ongoing political structures.

Opposition threatened neither good laws nor good education; nor did tension prevent the assertion of claims: "Every city ought to have methods with which the people can express their ambition."³⁴ Roman liberty never denied conflict, yet the community survived because of the power its political symbols exercised over consciousness. In Jungian terms, the reality of *fides* as practice held a numinous attraction; its symbols became embedded in the experience and awareness of each Roman citizen. Rome declined when its concept of public liberty eroded; civic *virtú*, obsessed with administration and power, disappeared, and private motives eclipsed any conception of a public good. Human nature asserted itself as depravity, and political authority lost all sense of the founding principles; Rome degenerated into a battle over power, and the Republic lay forgotten in the dim memory of the past. The consequence for Rome erupted in a political entropy, a brutal release of energy assuming horrendous proportions. Origins no longer meant anything; and ancient *virtú* ceased to exist. In the words of Titus Livius:

Rome was originally, when poor and small, a unique example of austere virtue; then it corrupted, it rotted, it slowly absorbed vices; so little by little we have been brought into the present condition where we are neither able to endure the evils from which we suffer nor face the remedies needed to cure them. . . . Wealth has made us greedy.³⁵

Lacking the decisive life-giving energy of renewal, political communities become overwhelmed by their own pasts; they remain bounded, in Machiavelli's view, by an historical decline which twists the original intentions, the principles of the beginnings. Any significant political change therefore involves rediscovering political vitality, those first or primary principles that made political life more than a self-interested lust after power. In Jungian analytic terms, consciousness may become clouded or made perverse by a socialization that impedes the flow of psychic energy, that distorts the archetypes. Therapy re-establishes a communication between the psychological present and the critical roots of the self-structure—the unconscious. When, as a consequence of the traumatic action of the Prince, the community rediscovers its beginnings, the political event signifies a realization (in political form) of the archetype of rebirth. It is a situation analogous to what Jung might see as a

34. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

35. Quoted in Rapaport, p. 229.

therapy enabling consciousness to conceive of its functions and purposes in terms that implicitly express the formative and life-giving potential of an archetypically defined unconscious. Recovery of the *political* past is a collective experience with collective implications; and for Machiavelli it means cutting through those historical patterns that have made identification with vitalizing political principles an impossible task. To *re*-found, then, consists of a kind of collective experience moving a political community closer to its roots in a common past; it is a therapy defying those historical relationships that prolong disintegration.

In Chapter 1, Book III of the *Discourses*³⁶ Machiavelli describes his conception. “The way to renew” Republics is to “carry them back to their beginnings . . .” and those original, primordial political principles, the source of so much strength and *virtù*, “must possess some goodness by means of which they gain their first reputation and their first growth.” Moving back, towards the archetypal meanings, brings therapy, what Machiavelli calls a cure. Time or historical process has corrupted the goodness of the beginnings; and “corruption necessarily kills” the political community. Machiavelli envisions a cure that possesses traumatic implications for the collectivity. Action initiates a “regress toward the beginnings,” and the good effect comes about in Republics either by “virtue of a man” or by “virtue of a law.” But it is much more effective if the change comes about by the “excellence of one man” who because of his energy and foresight, his commanding *virtù*, “spur[s] people into action.” Such individuals are rare; and it is such an individual that Machiavelli describes in *The Prince*. In Jungian terms, the Prince figure demonstrates the most dramatic manifestation of the curing agency. Even though Machiavelli entertains other curing Elixirs like good laws and good conspirators, each of these agents succeeds only if they possess a power breaking through customary law and the corruption of decadent habits and values. Each in Jungian terms could symbolize a mercurial quality. But given Machiavelli’s argument, the agent whose power seems most fundamental or primordial is the Prince.

Neither Machiavelli nor Jung places great value on a static *harmonia*, without dynamism or growth; neither wishes to see conflict eliminated from life. For Jung what distinguishes health from pathology appears in the “*unio mentalis*, the interior oneness which today we call individuation.”³⁷ For Machiavelli, the *unio politicus* follows on a return to the beginnings to a sense of public liberty transcending the tension of oppo-

36. Cf. *Discourses*, pp. 419–23.

37. Jung, “The Conjunction,” vol. 14, p. 471.

sites. To what factors, then, does the Prince owe his great power; what gives him the capacity to break through corruption and tap the archetype of rebirth, thereby recovering the numinosity of the beginnings?

In Jungian terms, individuation presumes an open relationship between unconscious archetypes (psychological roots or origins) and consciousness. When the unconscious is blocked or prevented from infusing conscious perceptions, when the *persona* loses contact with archetypal structure, individuation suffers, and serious consequences arise from energy which possesses no outlet and from the irruption of archetypal energy into consciousness in the form of grotesque needs and representations. Critical to Jung's entire argument is the notion that lacking a progressive (conscious) and regressive (unconscious) dialectic,³⁸ the psyche suffers breakdown and perversion. Similarly in Machiavelli's argument: Fortuna becomes a critical figure in establishing the health of the political community; and much of the success of the Prince depends on mastering Fortuna and establishing a relationship that releases a unifying energy. Political actors who face a hostile Fortuna inevitably fall: "I conclude then (with Fortune varying and men remaining stubborn in their ways) that men are successful while they are in close harmony with Fortune, and when they are out of harmony, they are unsuccessful."³⁹ In Jungian terms, the nature of that harmony involves a mutual infusing of energy, a dialectical individuating process which maintains the autonomy of self. Such autonomy may be threatened if the *anima* presence is not fully recognized as vital to psychological health. In what respects, then, can it be argued that the *anima* figure (an autonomous personality, a part of the inner world) appears in the symbol of Fortuna?

Each figure, the Prince and Fortuna, seems drawn to the other; "Fortuna is a woman and . . . like a woman, she is the friend of young men, because they are less cautious, more spirited and with more boldness master her."⁴⁰ In Jungian terms, Eros precipitates that relatedness, its interweaving; it brings a wholeness to the relationship, an attraction, and conditions the nature of our conscious perception. In the dialectic between consciousness and unconsciousness, Eros has power; and in alchemy the erotic presence manifests itself through the intensity of the chymical marriage, a great energy which "springs from a corresponding

38. Cf. C. G. Jung, "On the Nature of the Psyche," *Collected Works* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, Bollingen Paperback edition, 1975), vol. 8, pp. 32ff.

39. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 92.

40. *Ibid.*

great tension of opposites.” In the alchemical *imaginatio* Eros produces “the concentrated extract of the life forces both physical and psychic.”⁴¹ But this erotic union, Jung’s transcendent function, would be impossible without the active presence of the *anima*. “Just as for the purpose of individuation or self realization, it is essential for a man to distinguish between what he is and how he appears to himself and others,” it is equally as critical for psychic survival to recognize the *anima* presence, and to become “conscious of [the] visible system of relations in the unconscious.”⁴² Through this process, not only does each dimension of the psyche relate to its opposing half, but that relationship, given a healthy exchange, will not disintegrate into separation. The *persona* “distinguish[es] itself from the *anima*, but still assimilates her power.” This separation, like the separation of opposites within a developing unification, signifies health; being unaware of the invisible within the self and psychically blocking its expression brings pathology and pain. The more “personally she is taken,” the more the *anima* becomes assimilated to the self without devouring the ego, “the better”;⁴³ however, “failure to adapt to this inner world may at any time burst in upon us with annihilating force.”

The refusal of consciousness to adapt to the *anima*, to open itself to an unconscious energy, initiates an unproductive psychic imbalance haunting consciousness through debilitating behavior and massive transferences of affect. The *persona*, filled with anger and rage, may look outward towards political forms of satisfaction; and the victims of a deranged political psyche filled by archetypal energy may be individuals, groups, populations, or entire societies. Again, Jung keeps insisting that to deny the *anima* power, to repress and block self-expression endangers survival; great flows of energy might take over consciousness. It is as serious a phenomenon, particularly in a political sense, as the opposite consequence: the ego weakened through repression, refusing to communicate with the *anima* power, or neurotically incapacitated because of *anima*-related complexes. How we confront this inner world, then, determines the extent of our psychic health and our capacity to exist as free thinking and freely individuating human beings. By objectifying the effects of the *anima*, through a willingness to look inwards and accept what is discovered, and trying to “understand what content underlies

41. C. G. Jung, “The Psychic Nature of the Alchemical Work,” *Collected Works*, vol. 12, p. 278.

42. C. G. Jung, “Individuation,” *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, in *Collected Works* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, Bollingen Paperback edition), vol. 7, p. 195.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 200.

those effects,” the psyche “adapts to and is protected against the invisible.”⁴⁴ Failure to adapt either annihilates the ego or prepares a situation where the *anima* as the invisible erupts into the ego. The “complicated transformations” of the *anima* presence “are as rich and strange as the world itself”; and the elusive goal of “wholeness,” the psychic *unio mentalis*, is ultimately dependent on the *anima*, energy signifying a truly life-creating process.⁴⁵

Alchemy’s golden flower, the product of the chymical marriage, suggests such an outcome. When Paracelsus asks, “When the heavenly marriage is accomplished who will deny its super exceilent virtue?”⁴⁶ he refers to a *rejuvenatio* brought about by the power released through the unification of opposites, the male and female that Eliade sees as vital to the alchemical *coniunctio*. Only a unified personality for Jung attains complete autonomy, and only a political community for Machiavelli discovering its common roots, its identity beyond particular claims made in its name, realizes its potentiality with *virtú* and political courage. For Jung no “personality which is split up into partial aspects” attains a healthy, individuated state; similarly with Machiavelli: it is not a community divided, warring, and corrupt that brings unity. In his joining with Fortuna, the Prince initiates a recovery of the beginnings; it is a process infused and determined by Eros.

By no means then should this opportunity be neglected, in order that Italy, after so long a time may see her redeemer come. I cannot express with what love he will be received in all the provinces that have suffered from these alien floods, with what thirst for vengeance, with what firm loyalty, with what gratitude, with what tears. What gates will be shut against him? What peoples will refuse him obedience? What envy will oppose him? What Italy will refuse him homage?⁴⁷

The golden flower in a political sense appears in what the Prince, as-

44. *Ibid.*, p. 205.

45. *Fortuna*, while possessing the potential to bring health, also externalizes a dangerous power; she threatens and attacks; like the *anima*, *fortuna* may menace the autonomy of the masculine actor; in psychoanalytic terms, as the “psychology of the matriarchal woman,” the *anima* “attracts the mother-complexes of all the men in her vicinity and robs them of their independence . . .” (C. G. Jung, “The Vision of Zosimos,” vol. 13, p. 99). In other forms she “frequently has a shady character; in fact, she sometimes stands for evil itself. . . . She is the dark and dreaded maternal womb which is of essentially ambivalent nature” (C. G. Jung, “Individual Dream Symbolism in Relation to Alchemy,” vol. 12, p. 151).

46. Jung, “Paracelsus as a Spiritual Phenomenon,” vol. 13, p. 163.

47. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 96.

simulating the energy of Fortuna, creates as a redeemer; it is the fruit of what the alchemist would see as the chymical marriage.

V. The Prince and the Spirit-Mercurius: Alchemy and the Symbology of Change

Note the following from a medieval alchemist: “He who works through the spirit of another and by a hired hand will behold results that are far from the truth; and conversely, he who gives his services to another as assistant in the laboratory will never be admitted to the Queen’s mysteries.”⁴⁸ Admittedly, the observation is somewhat esoteric and highly metaphoric; but it does establish a point about alchemists: their refusal to rely on or trust that which derives from an unnatural mode of exchange—the mercenary. In a similar vein Machiavelli warns against using mercenaries: “The mercenary and the auxilliary are useless and dangerous”; they bring great harm and cause tremendous damage to political objectives and purposes. “If a Prince continues to base his government on mercenary armies, he will never be either stable or safe”;⁴⁹ totally unscrupulous, without loyalty, the mercenary embodies the worst aspects of political life. For Machiavelli, he truly stands as Italy’s “*densa, cruda, grossa*,” the most grotesque representation of the political *prima materia*, its essential violence and flux. Only money attracts the mercenary; and for this reason his usefulness is of questionable value. Any Prince who employs mercenaries shows an essential weakness, since the mercenary contributes to entropic consequences and poses an almost certain danger; “your ruin is postponed only as long as attack on you is postponed; in peace you are plundered by them [mercenaries]; in war by your enemies.”⁵⁰ Reliance on mercenaries, then, brings only destruction and should be avoided. The alchemical transforming power attains its objective through its own singular, autonomous power; and so with the ideal Prince: he relies only on his own good arms and good laws.

Another set of symbols critical to Machiavelli’s argument appear in the lion and fox. From a Jungian perspective, not only do these figures emerge in alchemical formulations, but each refers to psychological qualities and describes, indirectly, archetypal structures in the collective unconscious. “One of the manifestations in the alchemical process of transformation is the lion, . . . luring the lion out of Saturn’s mountain

48. Jung, “Religious Ideas in Alchemy,” vol. 12, p. 313.

49. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 47.

50. *Ibid.*

cave.”⁵¹ Symbols, for Jung “that intermediate realm of subtle reality,” do not have a fortuitous origin; their impact on consciousness reflects an intended need, and their numinosity directly corresponds to the intensity of need felt by a particular audience, culture, or society. Symbols express deeply felt affect; and it is this quality Jung sees in the alchemical symbolism of the lion. “Lions like all wild animals indicate latent affect”; and the lion “plays an important part in alchemy and has much the same meaning.”⁵² As a symbolic representation of energy, the lion is a power that has to be controlled. An insecure, psychically inflated ego⁵³ might demonstrate rage; but it is a rage whose consequences either incapacitate action through self-destructive mechanisms or a rage totally out of proportion, bringing havoc to political forms, a monster like Plato’s tyrant. Such a *persona* has literally been devoured by the unconscious; the ego lacks all defining ability; it succumbs and finally dies in an outpouring of infantile anger. The Prince, however, directs and maintains a hold on his energy; the alchemical lion “is a fiery animal, an emblem of the devil and stands for the danger of being swallowed by the unconscious”;⁵⁴ the Prince avoids this danger, and at all times, in Machiavelli’s description, the Prince dominates his own lion-mana; he uses the strength when he must; and the power in the collective unconscious works to the benefit of the Prince-figure. Again, the lion as power symbolizes a creative dialectical exchange between consciousness and archetypes in the collective unconscious.

Similarly with the fox: as a symbol of conscious deception and cunning, the fox portrays psychological qualities that, for example, N. O.

51. Jung, “The Spirit Mercurius,” vol. 13, p. 227.

52. Jung, “Individual Dream Symbolism in Relation to Alchemy,” vol. 12, p. 190.

53. In Jungian analysis, psychic inflation “involves an extension of the personality beyond individual limits, in other words, a state of being puffed up.” In such a state “a man fills a space which normally he cannot fill. He can only fill it by appropriating to himself contents and qualities which properly exist for themselves alone and should therefore remain outside our bounds.” For Jung psychic inflation may characterize certain political types: “When, therefore, I identify myself with my office or title, I behave as though I myself were the whole complex of social factors of which that office consists, or as though I were not only the bearer of the office, but also and at the same time the approval of society. I have made an extraordinary extension of myself and have usurped qualities which are not in me but outside me. *L’état c'est moi* is the motto for such people.” Cf. “The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious,” vol. 7, p. 143.

54. Jung, “Individual Dream Symbolism in Relation to Alchemy,” vol. 12, p. 190.

Brown sees in an archetypal figure like Hermes—closely associated with the alchemical tradition.⁵⁵ Thievery, trickery, change, speed, deception, illusion, dissembling—all are characteristics which denote a particular psychological state; in addition, the fox possesses qualities which Jung associates with the archetype of the trickster, a presence he finds in myths from archaic cultures, “an autonomous primordial image which is universally present in the preconscious makeup of the human psyche.”⁵⁶ Qualities Machiavelli associates with fox-like action (particularly the manipulation of illusion and consciousness) Jung attaches to the trickster archetype: “the principle of spontaneous movement and activity . . . the spontaneous capacity to produce images independently of sense perception; . . . the autonomous and sovereign manipulation of these images.”⁵⁷

In Machiavelli's argument, the Prince blends qualities of both the lion and fox in his action; this capacity, to use both powers effectively, allows the Prince to overcome the inhibiting and often deadly effect of necessity; it is also this cunning and strength which gives the Prince power over Fortuna. Never is it apparent that the Prince loses control of either the lion or the fox; Machiavelli describes the process as follows:

Since then a Prince is necessitated to play the animal well, he chooses among the beasts the fox and the lion, because the lion does not protect himself from traps; the fox does not protect him-

55. Cf. N. O. Brown, *Hermes the Thief* (New York: Vintage, 1969). Hermes as Trickster reveals “cunning in the execution of his theft and guile in his verbal exchanges with Apollo and Zeus. His tricks are sometimes magical” (p. 74). In some contexts, Hermes symbolizes “the birth of a new world” (p. 90); he brings regeneration, possibility. As a trickster figure he is often perceived as the “giver of good things,” the culture hero (p. 22). In Greek culture, it is the early Hermes, the archaic figure, who appears to be unarmed, muscular, tough; by the time of the fifth century and its refinement, Hermes had become “civilized, the flower of physical and mental culture, refined by the leisure arts of music and gymnastic—the concept immortalized in the Hermes of Praxiteles” (p. 100). Aristotle in the *Politics* has a few hostile remarks to make about Hermes: he “does little good, but spends his whole time cheating the human race.” But then Aristotle might have said the same thing about the Prince [p. 104 (1266b.30)]. In Jungian analysis, the Hermes figure appears in the symbolization of spirit Mercurius. “The spiritus mercurialis is the alchemist's guide (Hermes Psychopompos) and their tempter; he is their good luck and their ruin.” Cf. Jung, “Individual Dream Symbolism in Relation to Alchemy,” vol. 12, p. 67.

56. Cf. Jung, “The Phenomenology of the Spirit in Fair Tales,” vol. 9, Part 1, p. 214.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 212.

self from the wolves. The Prince must be a fox, therefore, to recognize the traps and a lion to frighten the wolves.⁵⁸

The Prince masters Fortuna; he combines qualities derivative of the lion-mana and the archetype of the trickster; his action regenerates and as such it symbolizes the archetype of rebirth. From an alchemical perspective, the Prince figure pushes beyond the ordinary; he is, in this respect, like the spirit Mercurius, a presence for Jung which determines the intensity and quality of alchemical transformation. It is the power of this figure which gives magical significance to the alchemical *opus*.

Mercurius, in Jung's analysis, appears time and again in alchemical formulations, in archaic myths, in dreams and fantasies. What does this mean? Is there a generic quality, a universal significance, to Mercurius; does the symbol suggest an unconscious dynamic embedded in the very roots of human existence? For Jung the answer is unequivocally yes, and he devotes considerable time in his study of alchemy to Mercurius, developing persuasive evidence through myths, dreams, woodcarvings, etchings, and so on, to argue that Mercurius symbolizes the *lapis philosophorum*, the "philosopher's stone." It is Mercurius who releases the power of regeneration, who accomplishes fantastic transformations. And the universality of this symbol, its critical function in the alchemical process, leads Jung to draw the following conclusion: "One can hardly escape the conclusion that Mercurius as the *lapis* is a symbolic expression for the psychological complex which I have defined as the self."⁵⁹ What, then, are some of the characteristics of this extraordinary archetype, this earth-shattering spirit, who appears in many different shapes and precipitates in alchemy the traumatic event of regeneration? Further, if a plausible case can be made that spirit Mercurius and the Prince symbolize identical psychological qualities, might it not be true that Machiavelli's treatise, as an embodiment of images implicitly revealing structures in the unconscious, portrays a parable of the self?

The philosopher's stone acts in alchemy as the critical agency of transformation; it initiates the complex chemical process, which by working on the *prima materia*, releases the life-giving substance and transforms base matter into gold. Although it may appear in varied shapes, such as crystal, quicksilver, fire, and so on, depending on the particular alchemical myth or vision, each manifestation of the stone (the power of Mercurius) performs the same function: the redemption of the *prima materia*

58. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 65.

59. Jung, "The Spirit Mercurius," vol. 13, p. 246.

and the bringing of therapy. Mercurius facilitates “the fertility of men and animals, heal[s] wounds and cure[s] sickness of the body and soul.”⁶⁰ It frees “matter, spirit, and the possibility of redeeming bodies corrupted by the passage of time”;⁶¹ the *lapis* brings about a “return to the matrix”⁶² and thoroughly destroys “the illness resulting from the ravages of time, that is, from old age and death.”⁶³

In the symbolism of alchemy, the *lapis* has appeared as divine water having the power to dissolve corrupt matter; it is dangerous and should be approached with great care; “the tincture of divine water is far from being merely curative and ennobling in its effects, but it may also act as a deadly poison that penetrates other bodies as pervasively as the *pneuma* penetrates its stone.”⁶⁴ Alchemy consistently emphasizes the deadliness of the Spirit’ presence: “The living mercurius is called the scorpion, that is venom. . . .”⁶⁵ It moves like the “redeeming psychopomp and quicksilver,”⁶⁶ acts decisively, destroys, purifies, and in the process commits actions unthinkable in the context of conventional ethics; it “transforms all base metals into the noble ones,” and like quicksilver it “lurks unseen in the ore and must first be expelled if it is to be recovered *in substantia*.”⁶⁷ Mercury draws out the redemptive potentiality. “The imperfect state” in the symbolism of alchemy, “is like the sleeping state; substances lie in it like the sleepers chained in Hades and are awakened as from death to a new and more beautiful life by the divine tincture extracted from the inspired stone.”⁶⁸ In political terms, the spirit Mercurius as the Prince-figure releases Italy from the chains of the corrupt and founds the life-giving political idea. Is not the Prince both from the decay of Italian politics and yet ideally beyond it? And does he not draw a redeeming potential from the vast chaos of Italy beyond the capacity of any other actor in the universe Machiavelli describes? The Prince transcends the sinister, depraved, rootless *condottiere*; he uncovers value in the *massa confusa*; and it is that value, the return to “beginnings” as a regenerative event, that structures his action.

Mercurius manipulates appearances; he confounds consciousness. He therefore appears in some alchemical symbolism as a “god of illusion and

60. Ibid., “The Vision of Zosimos,” p. 97.

61. Eliade, op. cit. p. 129.

62. Ibid., p. 120.

63. Ibid.

64. Jung, “Religious Ideas in Alchemy,” vol. 12, pp. 297, 299.

65. Jung, “The Vision of Zosimos,” vol. 13, p. 79, n. 64.

66. Jung, “Religious Ideas in Alchemy,” vol. 12, p. 299.

67. Ibid., p. 297.

68. Ibid.

delusion of whom it is rightly said: *'Invenitur in vena / Sanguine plena'* (he is found in the vein swollen with blood)."⁶⁹ It is well known that the Prince deals in illusions; not only does the Prince know "how to put to use the traits of animal and man"; he "addle[s] the brains of men with trickery"—⁷⁰ his fox-like quality. As adaptable and changing as Mercurius, the Prince finds it necessary to appear to be one thing and then do another. As master of illusion and deception, the Prince violates accepted ethical canons to act effectively. He may appear to be "merciful, trustworthy, humane, blameless, religious"; but, if such traits impede action, "to be in such measure prepared in mind that if you need to be not so, you can and do change to the contrary." To maintain his power, a Prince "cannot practice all those things for which men are considered good, being often forced, in order to keep his position, to act contrary to truth, contrary to charity, contrary to humanity, contrary to religion." Adaptability, then, so characteristic of Mercurius, determines how the Prince relates to ethics; what is critical is not saving convention—which for Machiavelli causes corruption—but in transcending it through the *rejuvenatio*. An alchemist could never succeed if he attempted to transform substances through conventional wisdom; a similar vision haunts Machiavelli. What exists as accepted, conventional value is insufficient in attaining fundamental transformation. A good prince, then, "knows how to do wrong when he must."⁷¹ Therefore, to rely on convention as the source of judgment means to prolong suffering, to defer to the defining qualities of the "*cruda, grossa, densa*."

In *The Prince* Machiavelli sees historical conceptions of appropriateness and goodness as strategic possibilities, and not as morally binding on the Prince as an actor. A similar process occurs with the action of the spirit Mercurius and the transforming power of the philosopher's stone. In the alchemical literature Mercurius is often seen to be "evasive and is labeled . . . *cervus fugitus* (fugitive stag) . . . contemptible."⁷² Equated with such destructive animal figures as the "serpent, dragon, raven, lion, basilisk, and eagle,"⁷³ Mercurius knows no constraints—particularly those deriving from historical convention. Like the Jungian unconscious (the dialectic between energy and archetype), Mercurius transcends conscious derivations of restraints, ethical commandments, and customary law. His reality as a power, as a pragmatic life force, is

69. Jung, "The Spirit Mercurius," vol. 13, p. 247.

70. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 64.

71. *Ibid.*, above quotations, p. 66.

72. Jung, "Individual Dream Symbolism in Relation to Alchemy," vol. 12, p. 146.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

more fundamental, more generic than any structure of consciousness or cognition; Mercurius comes not from the ego but from a psychological time deeply conditioned by archaic and primordial roots. His feats, immortalized in dramatic mythical symbols, embody extraordinary characteristics: "the serpent which rejoices in itself, impregnates itself, and brings itself forth in a single day"; he "slays all things with its venom and will become fire from the fire (*et ab igne ignis fuerit*)."⁷⁴ Mercurius owes his existence to the unconscious.

Mercurius, then, for Jung signifies a power that unleashes terrible destruction, yet at the same time possesses super-human qualities capable of liberating the life-giving substance. Like all archetypes, Mercurius suggests a primordial motif, more fundamental than any single human being, a form or structure of power present in the collective unconscious. "We neither can nor should try to force this numinous being, at the risk of our own psychic destruction, into our narrow human mould, for it is greater than man's consciousness and greater than his will."⁷⁵ If, then, the Prince resembles the spirit Mercurius as a transforming power and as a psychological archetype, it may be possible to see some affinity between the functions of the Prince and those of the alchemical *lapis*. I should add that the analogy obviously suggests a speculative set of relationships; but the argument may open up a different way of conceiving this critical figure in the history of political thought.

VI. Conclusion: The Archetype of the Daemon-Magician and Machiavelli as Theorist

Throughout the discussion, the *Prince* has been seen as an analogue to the unconscious, a symbolization subject to interpretation from a Jungian perspective, a figure in a psychological history and time. I have also attempted to demonstrate certain tentative relationships between alchemy as a metaphor and theoretical images in Machiavelli's *Prince*. The essay specifically set out to make these connections, and inevitably several potentially interesting issues were ignored. I should like briefly to mention a few of them. (1) The relation of Machiavelli's political theory to an alchemical tradition: It seems that if any relationship did exist it probably was implicit rather than explicit. Further, it is likely that Machiavelli distinguished himself from alchemical formulations, particularly from the highly religious and reclusive dimension characteristic of practitioners of alchemy. The intense theology, the often obscure parabolic

74. Jung, "The Vision of Zosimos," vol. 13, p. 79, n. 64.

75. Jung, "The Philosophical Tree," vol. 13, p. 328.

nature of their explanations and visions would suggest that at least consciously, Machiavelli had little in common with the alchemists. Alchemy moves away from the world; and Machiavelli saw himself as a man of affairs. (2) *The Prince* as a specific work in an alchemical tradition: *The Prince* appears in no history of alchemy, and given the highly religious nature of medieval alchemy, it is unlikely that a persuasive argument could be made to include *The Prince* in such a history. What might be more interesting is to examine alchemical documents, using the wealth of material in Jung, and to deduce from their mythological images common structural features. From that perspective, digging into Machiavelli's images as a statement about the unconscious in relation to other alchemical treatises, *The Prince* may be more appropriate to a medieval consciousness than a modern one. If the analogy with alchemy is persuasive, *The Prince* does accomplish a kind of magic. (3) The nature of Machiavelli's personal relationship to sources and influences connected with the practice and theory of alchemy: Such an historical investigation might tell us a great deal about the modernity or lack of it in Machiavelli's own consciousness and method. But it is quite probable that Machiavelli had little sympathy for what he might have regarded as the unreality of the alchemical pursuit, and its overt links with occult knowledge.

Now to a few concluding remarks. I have looked at *The Prince* both as a statement about psychological structure and as a metaphor relating to political phenomena, much in the same way a dream or fantasy might explain factors in the unconscious. To many this may not be a legitimate interpretive method; it is certainly not historical in the traditional sense of looking at the "tradition of political theory." But if the concept of the unconscious be regarded as integral to the development of values, institutions, and political forms, then those dynamics rising from the unconscious have a meaning and a history; it is a different kind of history, filled with symbol, archaic analogues, and inferential metaphors. For the discovery of meaning, the history of the unconscious relies more on psychoanalytic method than traditional lines of inquiry in historical research. Further, what I have done is not psycho-history; I have not looked into Machiavelli's childhood or into the relations established within his family; nor have I looked at his formative years—although such a study would be fascinating. The analysis conceives of a historical dimension in the psyche, and in Jungian terms not only does that dimension encompass what we remember from conscious experience, it also includes the origins of affect in a time predating that of conscious remembrance. Archetypes derive from that time. Further, for Jung structures exist in mental experience not specifically conscious in origin; however, it is the

conscious record or archive that persistently receives the attention of historians.

Finally, I would like to suggest that Jung provides an unusual archetype that may describe certain functions of political theory. If some forms of theoretical discourse embody more than a conscious rendering of concepts, facts, and specific historical relationships, and if their images, from a Jungian point of view, possess numinosity, then the theorist may embody through his conceptual activity an archetype Jung calls the "daemon-magician." The archetype has the potential to bring health, rescuing, through a therapeutic intervention, diseased and corrupt realities. The "daemon-magician" invents potions, concoctions, incantations to initiate the processes of health; he constructs powerful cures. Similarly with Machiavelli: theory suggests more than the description or justification of an existent state of things. Machiavelli seeks a transformation fundamentally altering the structure of the political order. He moves beyond the recording of data and facts into general observations on sickness and health, decay and cure. Theory, then, for Machiavelli contains a therapeutic function; it devises a curative process. In this sense it might be fitting to look at a figure like Machiavelli as "the voice of the wise magician who goes back in direct line to the figure of the medicine man in primitive society." And like the archaic shaman, he is "an immortal daemon that pierces the chaotic darknesses of brute life with the light of meaning. He is the enlightener, the master and teacher. . . ." ⁷⁶

76. Jung, "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious," vol. 9, pt. 1, p. 37.